



**EUROPEAN HERITAGE DAYS**  
A joint action of the Council of Europe and the European Union

**2010 EVALUATION FORM**

**I. Country**

Country: England - UK

Date: 9-12 September 2010

Theme: No national theme

**II. Bodies responsible and/or involved in the coordination and organisation of the national EHD (if any changes)**

Heritage Open Days 2010 was organised nationally by English Heritage's Outreach department.

**III. Theme 2010**

a) How did you draw attention to the theme during the EHD?

There is no national theme as such as local organisers are concerned that a thematic approach could potentially exclude many places from taking part. As Heritage Open Days invites communities to celebrate their heritage assets and encourages them to take ownership of the programme, it is up to local organisers to choose an annual theme if they wish. In 2010, for instance, Lincolnshire, co-ordinated by the Heritage Trust for Lincolnshire, focussed on a military theme. Mole Valley in Surrey chose the motto "By George!" to open up Georgian buildings and put on activities that linked in with the period whereas Hull honoured one of its famous sons, Philip Larkin, with a range of "Larkinalia!" events.

Every year several topical clusters emerge across the national programme though. These may result from anniversaries of either local or national importance, general cultural or socio-political trends or thematic suggestions communicated in Heritage Open Days newsletters or workshops.

Tying in with English Heritage's exploration of women's contribution to the historic environment, the 2010 programme boasted an unprecedented number of properties which celebrated famous women residents or owners as well as events which threw a (fresh) light on places that were shaped for and by women.

The sustainable living strand continued to grow with a record 175 eco-themed events joining in this year. A number of local and national networks (e.g. Old Home Super Home Network) chose to use Heritage Open Days as a platform to showcase eco-refurbished houses and new-build.

A growing number of walks exploring cultural landscapes as wildlife habitats as well as the history of national and local nature reserves resonated with recent UK-wide campaigns to promote the outdoors. One of the more unusual events was a late night walk through Gloucester's wetland nature reserve to view a 4\* Severn bore.

b) Was the public interested in this theme?

In the wake of far-reaching public spending cuts, the aspect of free access – emphasized by the event's strapline "Free to explore" – played an important role in raising the event's profile and popularity.

#### IV. Participation

a) Number of sites and monuments open to the public (and possible geographical division by cities or regions):

4,463 property openings and activities were registered with English Heritage. This further increase of 363 listings took the event's continuous growth into its ninth year. Three quarters of the 2010 event programme consisted of property openings (3,363) while 26% were guided walks or events which brought local history and heritage to life.

The South East with 1,179 entries remained the region with the greatest density of events, contributing over a quarter to the national programme while Surrey, the most active county with 325 registered sites and activities, boasted more listings than the entire West Midlands region. Across the South Eastern counties, growth was more even than in previous years, when a variety of counties and council areas experienced an unprecedented boom under the driving force of emerging power houses such as the Regency Town House in Brighton & Hove and Oxford Preservation Trust in Oxford. The Eastern region saw the largest percentage of growth nationally. This was largely due to Cambridgeshire almost doubling participation and Suffolk bouncing back to previous strength. The South West (17% up from the year before) benefited from new eco-house schemes while the East Midlands programme was boosted by increased activity in Leicestershire and Lincolnshire.

b) Number of other events proposed (please specify):

514 guided walks and tours

534 other interpretive events such as exhibitions, re-enactments or skills demonstrations/workshops

Heritage Open Days is more than bricks and mortar. Many events explore cultural heritage in all its forms, ranging from language, song and dance to food and other cultural practices. This wider definition of heritage not only helps engage with new audience groups, it also helps long-established programmes to remain fresh and relevant.

c) Number of visitors (based on entries to sites):

Based on detailed information provided for 1,024 sites and events plus some aggregated figures for another 786 entries, an estimated 1,172,430 visits were generated over the four days.

d) Other:

A total 1,457 organisers took part in 2010. While 82% registered one property or event, 5% registered more than ten entries, collectively contributing over half of the national programme. It is this group of multiple-site organisers from councils and amenity societies who are essential to the event's long-term success. Not only do they fuel regional growth by mobilising local participants, their example also radiates out to neighbouring areas.

## **V. Description of the public taking part in the EHD**

With half of the event's audience being 55+ years old, the visitor age remained high. As the proportion of over 65-year olds dropped by 9% and that of visitors aged between 35 to 44 increased by 6%, it is however becoming altogether younger. Correlated to the overall age shift, the number of people with a limiting disability went down too. At 9% the proportion of visitors from different ethnic groups was higher than ever.

The event is still generating a high number of 'new' visitors although with 45% of visitors attending a Heritage Open Days event for the first time the share was down by 5%. Interestingly, the percentage of people stating that they did not visit any heritage attractions over the past 12 months halved in comparison to the previous year. As 93% of respondents felt encouraged to attend other heritage venues and events in the future, this seems to be a further indication that Heritage Open Days acts as a gateway to cultural participation.

People's learning about their local heritage was the strongest outcome from visits as 82% saw this increased. 80% of visitors felt that their Heritage Open Days experience had enhanced their civic pride and 70% felt their sense of belonging to their communities had become more tangible. Although much milder at 56%, there was also a noticeable impact on people's all-round well-being.

## **VI. Media analysis**

a) What promotional material did you use and how did you distribute it?

We produced leaflets, flyers, posters including printed and electronic templates, open signs, balloons and badges. Their aim was to appeal to a diverse audience, in particular families, promote and increase the use of the website as the primary source of information, and support local organisers' promotional activities.

The material was distributed via Tourist Information Centres, libraries, community centres as well as through the networks of our local organisers.

b) What is your media strategy (press, radio, television, internet or other)?

As Heritage Open Days does not have any advertising budget, we rely entirely on free publicity in print and broadcast media.

Managed and funded by English Heritage's Corporate Communications team, the media campaign unfolded over three stages: In May a long-lead release was sent out to monthly consumer magazines. In early August regional COI Officers disseminated teaser releases based on a nationally agreed template. On 1 and 2 September, nine individual photo calls took place across the regions.

For the first time, Heritage Open Days did not invest time and money in organising a national launch event and neither was a show business celebrity enlisted to act as a spokesperson. The focus was put on unusual and quirky properties which were not normally open to the public, with Hastings being an exception in that the photo call at the Stade highlighted the town's unique fishing heritage and the memories of those who have kept this long tradition alive.

English Heritage also pursued joined-up approach in communicating with local organisers and co-ordinators. This helped maximise publicity opportunities, support local media activities and give local participants a voice in regionally distributed releases.

- c) What were the media results for the EHD (how many TV programmes, articles in the press, etc)?

The 2010 media campaign was an overall success, achieving a minimum of 1,789 pieces of coverage, including 61 pieces of broadcast. As only those pieces that were picked up by press cutting services were counted, the overall coverage is likely to be much larger.

National media coverage was exceptionally good in 2010 as not only most major dailies had picked up on the story but also radio and TV.

In line with general communication trends, online media, such as newspaper and BBC websites, online consumer information services and blogs are becoming more and more important as they engage a wide network of readers more directly. For instance, moneysavingexpert.com was the source of 6% of visits to the Heritage Open Days online directory.

## **VII. Visibility of the European dimension of the EHD**

The EHD logo is displayed on all marketing materials and our sister events in the UK are highlighted in our national leaflet.

The website dedicates a page and links to the EHD.

## **VIII. Financial analysis**

- a) How are the EHD financed? (public budgets, private sponsors, etc.):

The national co-ordination in 2010 was entirely publicly funded.

- b) What is the total budget allocated to the EHD? (explain the division within the budget):

The annual budget is £220,000. But the total costs across the organisation are close to £500,000 per year.

- c) Involvement of volunteers:

Organisers jointly spent a minimum £329,950 on staging Heritage Open Days locally and greatly depended on volunteers in their event delivery. Based on information provided by 388 organisers, we estimate that 39,350 volunteers spent 578,445 hours on Heritage Open Days. In addition, 7,143 paid staff were involved in the planning and running of events. As staff often contributed their voluntary time over the Heritage Open Days weekend to welcome visitors and provide behind-the-scenes tours the line between what strictly speaking constitutes a “volunteer” and what “paid staff” was blurred. It is therefore fair to say that the programme’s army of local helpers has grown to a healthy 46,493.

d) Is access free of charge for the public?

Yes. This is a key part of our entry criteria.

e) Other:

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## **IX. Activities for young people**

a) Were special activities for young people organised?

Almost half of the 2010 programme was marked as child-friendly, the largest proportion ever. Many sites offered special activities for children and families ranging from quiz trails to dressing up, drawing competitions to story telling.

b) Was any specific educational material provided?

Since our education programme ended in 2008, Heritage Open Days did not have the funding and capacity to develop and provide educational resources on a national level. But local organisers do produce a range of informal educational materials ranging from I-spy questionnaires to children passports.

## **X. Historical analysis**

a) For how many years have you celebrated the EHD in your country?

Heritage Open Days was established by the Civic Trust as national scheme in 1994 after a successful pilot in several areas the year before.

b) Please describe the evolution of the EHD from the beginning until 2010:

Starting out with some 700 properties opened up by 380 organisers in 1994, Heritage Open Days has since grown into England’s largest and most popular grassroots heritage event. A record 4,463 approved property openings and activities (not counting events which were cancelled before 10 September) were listed in the 2010 event directory. This further increase of almost 400 listings took the event’s continuous growth into its ninth year. The expansion was fuelled by a steady increase of the event’s profile, the arrival of the English Heritage Outreach team in 2003 and Heritage Open Days’ collaboration with its History Matters Campaign partners in 2006, which saw all major heritage organizations in England choosing the Heritage Open Days Saturday as their national open day. While 2,177 properties and activities took part in 2002, 2,800 were registered in 2004. The number of entries soared again in 2006 with 3,512 listings in the directory, including over 300 National Trust, English Heritage and Historic Houses Association sites waiving their

usual admission charges. Since 2001, which saw the number of entries drastically dipping after a bumper participation in the Millennium year, the programme has grown by 109%, while the number of organisers rose by 82%.

The number of visits did not increase proportionally with the number of participating properties and events. In 2006, attendance reached the 1-million benchmark for the first time. In 2010, thanks to a combination of excellent media coverage and recession fuelled demand for local free visiting opportunities, visits peaked at an estimated 1,172,000. The numbers however do not reflect the actual interest in and awareness of Heritage Open Days. Likewise, an increase in visiting opportunities does not necessarily mean an increase in overall visiting capacity. Due to the fact that many sites and events have limited access and run timed pre-booked tours, their impact on visitor figures will always be minimal.

c) Are the EHD as popular as at the beginning? (more so? or less so?)

See above.

## **XI. Logos used**

Heritage Open Days, English Heritage, EHD/CoE

## **XII. Global assessment of the 2010 edition**

Heritage Open Days 2010 was undoubtedly the most successful event in the sixteen-year history of England's annual celebration of local architecture, history and culture. A record 4,463 properties and events – 363 more than in 2009 – attracted over 1 million visits across four days. A decade of geographical and demographical expansion has consolidated Heritage Open Days' position as England's leading voluntary cultural event.

Against the backdrop of fast-changing socio-economic change, Heritage Open Days has continued to widen its appeal and reconfirmed its relevance, with its audience profile becoming younger and more diverse and an army of civic-minded volunteers providing a vivid lesson in what is now coined the "Big Society".

## **XIII. What do you expect of the EHD coordination at the European level via the Council of Europe and the European Union?**

- Facilitating the liaison between national co-ordinators in person and online
- Encouraging best practice and skills sharing between co-ordinators
- Developing a vision for EHD in consultation with national co-ordinators
- Developing funding streams which local participants could tap into and would act as incentives for exploring European angles of interpretation and CoE priorities (e.g. young volunteers, education)

Given the advanced stage of devolution in the UK, it would make sense if the CoE reconsidered its policy of only funding travel expenses to the annual EHD Forums for only one co-ordinator from Britain.

**XIV. A survey on the Forum “Cultural Heritage, Participation, Prosperity” (Istanbul, 1-2 October) has already been carried out. If appropriate, please inform us if the Forum format followed by the annual meeting of the Coordinators met your expectations:**

Unfortunately, we were unable to attend.

**XV. Do you think that the coordinators’ meeting should also include organisational training in your country?**

It really depends on the experience and participation history of each member country/nation. It would be good to have a mix of pre-bookable topical workshops aimed at different needs/levels of experience, e.g. using social media marketing tools, evaluation methodologies, with co-ordinators presenting case studies. However, the most valuable aspect of any co-ordinator meeting should be the facilitation of networking.

**XVI. What is the added value of coordination at European level?**

Media and participants tend to be impressed when they learn that the open days are a Europe-wide movement. More could be made of the sheer scale and diversity of the European scheme because 50 countries celebrating their common as well as distinctive heritage is a great story.

**XVII. What do you think of the new EHD website [www.ehd.coe.int](http://www.ehd.coe.int)? How could it be improved?**

Much improved. Well done.

**XVIII. Theme and dates chosen for 2011 (if already available<sup>1</sup>)**

8-11 September 2011

No national theme.

**XIX. Other/Remarks**

Following the Government’s Comprehensive Spending Review, which resulted in a 32% cut in English Heritage’s grant-in-aid, English Heritage is in the process of finding a new national co-ordinating body for Heritage Open Days. While Heritage Open Days 2011 will still be delivered by English Heritage, the programme is set to be transferred on 1 October. English Heritage however is committed to the future of Heritage Open Days and will provide core funding for another three and half years after the organisational transfer.

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<sup>1</sup> A more detailed request for 2011 dates and theme will be sent to coordinators early in 2011